



Case Information

Reference/Case ID	300018509		
Scheduled Monument	Ellon Castle and garden		
Index no	SM7333	Grid ref	NJ 96000 30700
Date application validated	12 October 2016		
Summary of proposed works	Excavation of seven test pits to assess geophysical anomalies so as to aid interpretation and management of the garden		

1. Summary recommendation

This report recommends that approval for the excavation of seven test pits to assess geophysical anomalies so as to aid interpretation and management of the garden be granted without conditions.

2. Background

The historic environment asset and its cultural significance

The monument comprises the remains of old Ellon Castle and the designed garden landscape in which it is set. Ellon Castle was formerly the seat of the Kennedies of Kermuck. It now forms a principal feature in the formal garden laid out for Baillie James Gordon in the early 18th century. The (old) castle stands on a broad terrace overlooking a formal garden laid out in 1715 and still retaining aged yews, apparently remnants of the original planting. It is the 18th-century garden that is the subject of this application.

The cultural significance of the monument is vested in the surviving remains of a 16th-century castle, incorporating 18th-century additions, which was subsequently made the centerpiece of an 18th-century garden, which itself was modified in the 19th century. The monument contributes to an understanding of the evolving integration of domestic and landscape architecture over some five centuries.

The applicant

The application is for the excavation of seven test pits to assess geophysical anomalies so as to aid interpretation and management of the garden, and it has been submitted by Murray Archaeological Services Ltd on behalf of Ellon Castle Gardens Trust Ltd. The application is accompanied by an archaeological written scheme of investigation (WSI), and



a detailed 'Historic Garden Survey' that summarises what is known about the garden to date.

Ellon Castle Gardens Trust Ltd is a community based organisation that was recently formed to take on ownership and management of the old Ellon Castle and its designed garden landscape. Works to the monument involve both ensuring that upstanding masonry is consolidated and safe, and restoring the designed garden landscape, with the aim that the gardens will then be opened up to the wider public.

Pre-application discussions

The applicant has discussed the proposed works with HES, and the current application accords with the outcome of these discussions. The work follows on from a resistivity survey carried out earlier this year.

The applicant is aware that a review is currently underway looking at what designation (ie listing, scheduling) is likely to be best for the protection, recognition, and management of each component of the castle and gardens. The outcome of this review is not yet known, so at present the status quo is maintained and SMC is therefore required for the works.

3. Proposals

- Excavation (by hand) of seven archaeological test pits, each measuring no more than 2m by 1m, located over geophysical anomalies identified from a recent resistivity survey, followed by reinstatement.

Consented works – the works comprise the excavation of seven test pits to assess geophysical anomalies so as to aid interpretation and management of the garden.

Aims – the purpose of the works is to better understand the evolution of the historic garden (and hence its subsequent interpretation) through excavating a series of test pits targeted at geophysical anomalies. This work relates strongly to the aims of the community organisation that own the castle and gardens, as restoring the designed landscape and then providing public access requires a sound understanding of the historic asset in the first place; this work is designed to help inform that understanding.

Timetable – the applicant hopes to undertake the work during the winter months of 2016/2017 so that disturbance during the growing season is minimised.

Personnel – the archaeological evaluation will be undertaken by the applicant, Murray Archaeological Services, who is a suitably qualified and locally based commercial archaeological contractor.

4. Representations received



No third party representations were received.

5. Report

a) Policy considerations

The application should be considered with the following legislative and policy considerations in mind:

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

Part 1 Section 2: Control of works affecting scheduled monuments.

Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement June 2016

3.14. A monument is included in the schedule to secure the long-term legal protection of the monument in the national interest, in situ and as far as possible in the state it has come down to us. Scheduled monuments have an intrinsic value as monuments, not related to any concept of active use. It is the value of the monument to the nation's heritage, in terms set out in the section on Scheduling in Chapter 2 of this policy statement that is the primary consideration in determining applications for scheduled monument consent.

3.16. Works on scheduled monuments should therefore normally be the minimum level of intervention that is consistent with conserving what is culturally significant in a monument.

3.17. As each monument will require treatment specific to its individual nature, characteristics, significance and needs, any proposed change to it must be fully and explicitly justified.

3.18. Scheduled monument consent applications must be considered in terms of the cultural significance of the monument and the impact that the proposals would have upon this cultural significance. The more important particular features of the monument are to its cultural significance, the greater will be the case against interventions which modify these features.

3.19. Extensive intervention will only be allowed where it is clearly necessary to secure the longer-term preservation of the monument, or where it will clearly generate public benefits of national importance which outweigh the impact on the national cultural significance of the monument. Such public benefits could come from, for example, interventions which make public access to scheduled monuments easier, or assist public understanding, or will produce economic benefits once the works are completed.

3.20. Where change is proposed, it should be carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed, properly planned and executed, and where appropriate in the context of an individual monument, reversible.



b) Assessment

The works involve the excavation of seven test pits to assess geophysical anomalies so as to aid interpretation and management of the garden.

The physical overall impact of the test pits on the monument and its cultural significance will likely be minimal, as the works have been designed to answer questions relating to the evolution of the designed landscape in as least an invasive way as possible. However, by their very nature the test pits will involve the removal of archaeological deposits from the monument and will consequently be destructive. The trench dimensions are restricted to the minimum possible to achieve the project aims, and cover a very small proportion of the scheduled monument. As this part of the monument is a garden, the topsoil would likely have been routinely turned over and is unlikely to contain in situ archaeological deposits that relate to the cultural significance of the monument; below the cultivated layer, however, there is the possibility of in situ archaeological deposits being identified that add to the understanding of the designed landscape, if not also to the cultural significance of the monument.

The results of the test pits may improve our understanding of issues relating to the monument's conservation and interpretation, in particular our understanding of how the gardens and designed landscape were developed to reflect various changes associated with the old Ellon Castle, the new Ellon Castle, and the subsequent substantial demolition and remodelling of both. Given the vision to engage with the local community to encourage access and enhance understanding, this work should support this vision by making that understanding better informed.

The application has been accompanied by a detailed written scheme of investigation (WSI) that sets out a well-considered, appropriate and careful methodology. The WSI sets out a suitable method and timetable for reporting and process for designing post-excavation analyses and reporting. The project team are highly experienced and have an established track record of successful delivery of archaeological projects through to publication. Accordingly, the specified method of the work is appropriate to ensure it is undertaken to a professional standard, including post excavation, reporting and archiving. It reflects all professional expectations.

c) Other material considerations, including impact of the works on Protected Species and Places

No impact on Protected Species and Places is considered likely.

d) Conclusion

The application should be viewed as works as set out in both Part 1 Section 2 of the AMAA Act 1979 and paragraph 3.4 of the policy statement.



The works would involve controlled archaeological excavation within a very small part of a scheduled monument. The excavations are the minimum necessary to achieve the project's objective and would leave the vast majority of the site's archaeological deposits intact. They would not visually alter the monument. It is concluded that they would have no material effect on the overall significance of the monument and are, therefore, not inconsistent with paragraphs 3.16 and 3.18 of the policy statement.

The objectives of the proposed work have been clearly set out and include a clear public benefit of increased understanding, which is of importance given the community aspirations to restore the garden and facilitate informed public access. As such, the works meet with paragraph 3.17 of the policy statement.

Although the works are effectively destructive in nature, the works would affect only a very small proportion of the monument and are designed to be evaluative only in nature, so they are therefore not considered extensive. As such, they do not conflict with paragraph 3.19 of the policy statement.

The application meets with paragraph 3.20 of the policy statement because it has demonstrated that the works have been carefully considered, based on good authority, sensitively designed and properly planned. Consequently, no conditions are considered necessary.

6. Recommended decision

The works proposed are considered acceptable in meeting the terms of national policy for scheduled monuments, and also accounting for other material considerations.

I recommend consent is **granted without conditions**.

7. Conditions

No conditions have been attached to this decision.

8. Approval

Case officer	Oliver Lewis	Date	06 December 2016
Approved by	John Raven	Date	06 December 2016

Annex A – list of supporting documents

- Written scheme of investigation – Murray Archaeological Services
- Historic Garden Survey – July/August 2016